

Testimony on SB 388, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Economic and Environmental Future.

My name is Leslie Lewis, and I live in Lyme. I am the WalkCT Director at the CT Forest&Park Association and am also one of Governor Rell's appointees to the CT Greenways Council. From 1997 to 2007 I served as the coordinator for the Trails and Greenways Program at the CT DEP, and I was responsible for the implementation of the Greenways License Plate Grants among many other duties.

The legislature established the License Plate Grants as a way for our residents to voluntarily fund the planning and implementation of greenways around the state. While the actual grant awards are small (only \$5,000 each), they go a long way in paying for the mapping, signage, brochures, and local and regional greenway plans that have little other means of financial support within the current budget system.

Connecticut's citizens have been generous, purchasing close to \$100,000 worth of plates. I am always happy to see one on the road or in a parking lot. How would those people feel knowing that their donations for a specific program had been swept into the General Fund? As a plate-holder myself, I am angry.

Connecticut was and remains one of a handful of states that does not have a significant trails and greenways funding source that can support these projects and match federal dollars that are allocated through either the Transportation Enhancements or the Recreational Trails Program grants. The dollars raised through sales of the Greenways Plate are barely a blip on the radar screen of the budget, but they determine the success or failure of dozens of small projects around Connecticut. I urge you to enact this bill as drafted, including the renewal fees. Connecticut's greenways connect the places we live with the places we love. Please do what is right and restore the funds to their original purpose.